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AUGUSTUS PEABODY GARDNER

MAJOR
UNITED STATES NATIONAL GUARD

1865–1918

Though love repine, and reason chafe,
There came a voice without reply,—
"'T is man's perdition to be safe,
When for the truth he ought to die."

1919
PRIVATELY PRINTED AT THE RIVERSIDE PRESS
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ESSEX

Thine are the large winds and the splendid sun
Glutting the spread of heaven to the floor
Of waters rhythmic from far shore to shore,
And thine the stars, revealing one by one.
Thine the grave, lucent night's oblivion,
The tawny moon that waits below the skies,—
Strange as the dawn that smote their blistered eyes
Who watched from Calvary when the deed was done.
And thine the good brown earth that bares its breast
To thy benign October, thine the trees
Lusty with fruitage in the late year's rest;
And thine the men whose blood has glorified
Thy name with Liberty's divine decrees—
The men who loved thy soil and fought and died.

G. C. Lodge.

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AUGUSTUS PEABODY GARDNER

AUGUSTUS PEABODY GARDNER was born in Boston on the 5th of November, 1865, the third and youngest son of Joseph Peabody Gardner and Harriet Sears Amory. He came of pure English stock on both sides, the stock of yeomanry who came to America in the seventeenth century and settled in Essex County. The first Gardner we know of here was Thomas, from Dorchester, England, who landed at Gloucester, Massachusetts, in 1624, and from whom the Massachusetts Gardners are descended.

Augustus Gardner lost his mother at birth and his father before he was ten years old. He was brought up from the age of ten by his uncle, John L. Gardner, passing his winters in Boston and his summers in Beverly.

He was educated at Hopkinson's School in Boston and was ready for college when he was fifteen. His guardian considered this too early

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an age for Harvard and sent him to St. Paul's School for a year. In the autumn of 1882 he entered Harvard and was graduated with the class of 1886. He studied law for a year, but did not take a degree at the Law School.

Meantime he had become a farmer and landowner at Hamilton, Essex County, Massachusetts, having inherited the property there of his oldest brother who died in October, 1886. Here he devoted himself to the raising of Jersey cattle and in a smaller way to the breeding of thoroughbred horses.

He had gone into business with his uncles in Boston, and it is characteristic of him that he made himself an expert accountant and bookkeeper in order to be an efficient member of the family firm.

For about ten years after his graduation, Gardner led the life of many young men of his age and generation. He worked at his business, but his real interest was in the country where he looked after his cattle and his farm and between times played polo and rode to

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hounds. In 1892 he married, and in 1894 his only child, a daughter, was born.

His first active work in politics began in the presidential campaign of 1896. He regarded Bryan's first Free-Silver campaign as a menace to the prosperity of the country and took the stump for McKinley. From this time on his interest in national affairs continued and increased.

In 1898 when we went to war with Spain Gardner sought and obtained a commission in the Army and was assigned to the staff of Major-General James H. Wilson as Captain and Assistant Adjutant-General. General Wilson's command, the First Division, was in camp at Chickamauga for six weeks and in July sailed from Charleston for Porto Rico.

The day Gardner landed at Ponce he and his brother-in-law, who was serving as an ensign in the United States Navy, met most unexpectedly on the beach. I received the following letter:

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July 27, 1898

We have just met and are both well. We shall attack Ponce together this afternoon, or to-morrow morning.

Yours affectionately,

A. P. G., G. C. LODGE

The best idea I can give of Gardner's experiences in Porto Rico is by extracts from some of his letters.

Ponce, Porto Rico,
July 31, 1898

MY DEAREST CONSTANCE:

I am looking forward to the time when I can describe to you verbally the perfect ludicrousness of this situation.

We landed loaded to the muzzle and with our teeth set expecting to fight our way up here. Instead of which the inhabitants received us with open arms and tremendous enthusiasm, and the first night I slept or dreamt I slept for a little while in marble halls. The fact was

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that I did sleep on a tessellated pavement, but as I had nothing under me it came hard.

...We have pushed our outposts about eight miles towards San Juan and meanwhile spend our time trying to restore some semblance of method in this city and in paroling the Porto Rican Volunteer Army....

I hope we shall get ahead soon and I suppose we shall as soon as provisions and troops are landed....

Coamo, P. R., August 9, /98

MY DEAREST CONSTANCE:

I have been under fire in a fight this morning just outside of this town and as far as I can see I did all right. I believe the General has mentioned me in his dispatches.

Colonel Biddle and I left camp with the 16th Penna. yesterday evening and started into the mountains where we camped. At 12.30 A.M. Biddle and I left camp with the pioneer train and cleared the road for the troops. We had a very hard march, but managed to head off the

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Spaniards and captured 180, killing six or seven including the Commandant of Ponce. He exposed himself terribly. I had a shot at him myself with a Krag-Jorgensen which I borrowed. It was the only shot I fired and, thank Heaven, I missed.

It is almost impossible to realize that it is you they are firing at. You feel like saying, "You damn fools, don't point your confounded guns this way."...

I was in the saddle fourteen hours steadily except when I was leading my horse and part of the time during the fight. I should say the fight lasted about three-quarters of an hour and that about 3000 or more shots were fired....

Coamo, P. R., August 14, 1898

DEAREST CONSTANCE:

I suppose that the war is over and I shall try my best to get home soon....

I had not been in ten minutes from a dangerous reconnaissance when the news came

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that the protocol had been signed. I had been out in command of about thirty cavalrymen and signal men for thirty hours in the mountains trying to find a road by which to attack Aibonito from the rear.

It was a very unpleasant trip, as we were fired on from the trenches before we had been out two hours, and from that time on we were in danger from ambush, as our presence was known. Moreover, we had to drag our horses up the mountains and camp in the rain on the side of a hill without a fire to make coffee and not a stitch of canvas in the outfit.

The saddest thing I have seen was a company of the 3d Wisconsin marching in the funeral train of two of their number who were killed probably after the protocol was signed. It seemed so unnecessary, and the "Dead March" from "Saul" which the band played was harrowing.

I can't help being glad the war is over. Any man who has been under a hot fire and says he was not afraid is either a fool or a liar.

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There is no cowardice in being afraid. The question is whether a man does his duty in spite of his fear....

After the war was over, on September 5, 1898, General Wilson wrote from Ponce, Porto Rico, as follows:

Now that the war is over and we are about to return to the United States, I wish to inform you that the campaign which has just ended has more than confirmed the favourable opinion I formed at Chickamauga Park of the character and ability of Captain Augustus P. Gardner. He is a very able man with unusual aptitude for the duties of an adjutant-general. He is patient, painstaking, exact, and untiring in his work. Nothing ever deters him from getting to the bottom of any question, or of carrying through any duty entrusted to him. With a discriminating judgment and a certain understanding he has proven himself to be capable of mastering all the duties of his rank and position, and I do not doubt, of any higher

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rank or station he might have been called upon to fill had the war continued. It is the unanimous opinion of those with whom he has been associated on my staff, as well as of those at the headquarters of Generals Miles and Brooke, that he is so far as they know the best adjutant-general that has come into the Army from civil life during this war.

Then, too, he is as brave and cool as any veteran under fire, and has not failed to seek service upon every occasion which promised to result in a skirmish or a battle.

It may interest you to know that in addition to recommending him for the position of Colonel of the Sixth Massachusetts because I thought him to be just the man to bring that regiment out of its difficulties, I have in my official report of operations recommended him for the rank of Major in the Adjutant-General's Department, or, failing in that, for the brevet of Major United States Volunteers for gallant and meritorious services in the Porto Rican campaign....

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I do not know what Captain Gardner's ambition or purpose in life may be, but I am sure there is no private or public position of usefulness to which he may not hopefully aspire, for if he carries into the effort to attain his ends the same intelligence and serious earnestness of purpose which have characterized his services with me, he will most surely succeed....

Yours sincerely

JAMES H. WILSON
Maj. Gen. Vols.

In connection with this letter from General Wilson, I append two letters received after Major Gardner's death, one from General Wilson, and one from General O. H. Ernst, who commanded the First Brigade in the First Division in Porto Rico.

January 15, 1918

MRS. AUGUSTUS P. GARDNER.

MY DEAR MADAM:

I am stunned and deeply grieved by Major Gardner's death, and I offer you and

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your family my profoundest sympathy. From the Spanish War to the present time I have watched his career with the deepest interest. As a staff officer he was unrivaled in his constant and intelligent devotion to duty and I never knew a man from civil life who so quickly or so thoroughly familiarized himself with his technical duties, or who performed them with such marked ability. But that was not all. He was always, night and day, at his post, and in the hour of action never failed to offer himself for duty with the troops.

At the affair of Coamo, Porto Rico, he accompanied the turning column with Colonel, now Major-General, Biddle, and by putting himself with the very front of the fighting line showed the highest qualities of a soldier.

As a Congressman he was full of patriotic ardor and interest in the National welfare, and no man could dispute the correctness of his general course. After so many years service as a Representative, his resignation from Con-

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gress to re-enter the Army filled his friends and the Country with admiration....

That such a man should be carried away at the beginning of a new, and what must have been a successful, era of his useful and honourable life is hard, indeed, and must be profoundly regretted by all who had the privilege of knowing him.

May God rest his soul in peace! And may his fame continue to grow with the constituency which honoured itself so signally in honouring him for so many years as its Representative in Congress!

Again assuring you of my sincere regret and sympathy, I beg you to believe me,

Faithfully your friend

JAMES H. WILSON

January 17, 1918

MY DEAR MRS. GARDNER:

Will you allow an old admirer of your husband, tho' a stranger to you, to offer a word of sympathy in your terrible grief? Twenty

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years ago, in Porto Rico, I was a witness of the aptitude, zeal, and gallantry which he brought to the military service, and I have been an interested observer of his public career ever since. I appreciate more than most how great a National loss his death is.

It must be some poor consolation to you to feel that you have the sympathy of the entire Nation, and, poor as it is, I beg you to accept my contribution, which is great and sincere.

Yours very sincerely

O. H. ERNST

On his return from Porto Rico Gardner was very ill with typhoid fever, and on his recovery, in February, 1899, he went to Europe with his family.

In the fall of 1899 he was elected to the Massachusetts State Senate and served two terms there. He gave especial attention to military affairs and was on the Military Committee and Chairman of the Committee in his second term. At this time he was also Captain of

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Company E, Eighth Massachusetts Militia. On his resignation from the Senate in 1901 he was presented by his colleagues with a dress sword.

The winter of 1901–02 was passed in the South, but in March, 1902, Gardner received word that Judge Moody had resigned his seat in Congress to enter President Roosevelt's Cabinet, and immediately started North to announce his candidacy for Congress from the Sixth District of Massachusetts. After a hard fight, entailing constant personal work and a close attention to details, he won the nomination, and in November, 1902, was elected for the short session of Judge Moody's unexpired term and for the subsequent Congress. This was the beginning of fifteen years' continuous service in the House of Representatives. I cannot attempt to do more than touch on his political career; it belongs to the history of this country and must be described by other pens.

Gardner was always the friend of the Glou-

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cester fishermen and laboured for them early and late. He also worked through many years for the restriction of immigration and the protection of the American worker. He led the fight against "Cannonism" and was instrumental in reforming the Rules of the House. With his customary thoroughness he had made himself master of the rules of parliamentary procedure, and the Speaker, Mr. Clark, told me he was one of the ablest parliamentarians in the House. On March 12, 1915, the Speaker wrote to him as follows:

MY DEAR GARDNER:

...I take this opportunity to say in writing what I have very frequently said by word of mouth, and that is that I regard you as one of the ablest and most thoroughly honest Members of the House of Representatives. I wish you all sorts of happiness and prosperity. Please remember me to your wife.

Your friend

CHAMP CLARK

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In the summer of 1914 Gardner went abroad with his wife and daughter for a much-needed rest. There was not much rest connected with the trip, however, as he reached London July 19, and on August 2 came the European War.

Gardner went at once to the American Embassy in London to offer his services and was put to work to organize an office force. This he did so successfully that the machine he started has run the business end of the Embassy ever since. From August 7 until he sailed for home the middle of September, his attention was given to this work and also to minute and careful observation of the lack of preparedness in England and the terrible sacrifice of life resulting therefrom. He saw how it must prolong the conflict, and determined, on his return to the United States, to do all he could to spare his own country a like fate.

He reached home towards the end of September and made his first preparedness speech at Hamilton the day he arrived. He was run-

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ning for Congress, but his speech was entirely devoted to the War and conditions in Europe and to the necessity this country was under to prepare against war. He began on that day his campaign of two and a half years to bring the people to a realization of their defenceless condition that they might remedy it as rapidly as possible. He started with the Navy, as being the first line of defence, saying that "The wisest thing the United States can do is to build a Chinese wall of Dreadnoughts and battleships around this country and do it now!"

In those two years and eight months, until, in May, 1917, he himself entered the Army, his time and thought and strength were given to preparedness. At first he met with contempt and ridicule, and many ordinarily intelligent people were simply bored and thought him an alarmist. His was a voice crying in the wilderness and few listened or heeded. He became probably the best-informed man in the United States on Military and Naval conditions. His knowledge was vast and accurate.

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He had an iron memory, and all his facts were at his tongue's end. He made speeches all over the country, and at length people listened and heeded and called for him to tell them the truth.

In contrast to such statements as "Peace without victory," "Too proud to fight," "At need a million men will spring to arms in a single night," we may put Gardner's battle-cry, "Wake up, America!"

He said, "After all, men and nations, when a principle is involved, seldom count the cost unless they are 'too proud to fight.' How fortunate for civilization that Belgium was not 'too proud to fight.'"

"So long as there is an armed autocracy in the world there must be armed democracies to keep it in check."

For some years after the Spanish War, Gardner was a reserve officer in the United States Army, but finally resigned his commission. In December, 1916, when it looked as though America would go to war, he passed

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his physical examination successfully and re-entered the reserve.

On February 3, 1917, the German Ambassador was handed his passports, and on February 14 Gardner received his commission, unsigned, but dated February 14, as Colonel in the Adjutant-General's Department.

Events moved rapidly, and on April 6, 1917, the United States declared war on Germany.

Gardner proposed to resign at once from Congress and take up his commission in the Army. He was, however, a leading member of the Ways and Means Committee, the Revenue Bill was in Committee at that time, and at the request of the Speaker of the House and the Chairman of Ways and Means, Gardner remained in Congress till the Revenue Bill was reported and passed the House. On May 22 he resigned from Congress and on May 24 he was sworn into the service of the United States, his commission was signed, and he was ordered to report to General Bell at Governor's Island, New York.

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We will pause here for a moment and look back before we go on to the last few months of his life.

Gardner, as a youth and young man, was reserved, rebellious, and given to "kicking against the pricks." He was slow to make friends, but when he once gave his friendship it was for life. He was inclined to be opinionated and argumentative and was not always easy to get along with.

But all this time he was only finding himself, and if ever a man learned of life and learned to rule his spirit, it was he. Endowed with a high order of intelligence, a keen sense of humour and a remarkably retentive memory, the years of his life were spent in educating himself in the best way, that he might thereby serve his country and his countrymen.

As he grew older, it seemed as though all the roughnesses and thorns of his earlier nature were smoothed away, leaving the kind and gentle heart and the sound, ripe intellect

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in their mellow perfection. He was the best of companions and the best of friends, a true patriot and a real American.

Before he died he had begun perhaps to reap the reward of his untiring work for the country he loved so well and served so faithfully. At his death the whole nation seemed to rise to do him honour. Both Houses of Congress passed resolutions and adjourned out of respect to his memory, and he was offered a public funeral in the Capitol. The General Court of Massachusetts also passed resolutions and letters came from all over the United States. He had served his country well while living and gave himself for her sake at the last. In this connection I print a note received from Colonel Roosevelt:

Sagamore Hill, May 6, 1918

MY DEAR CONSTANCE:

When the war came, Gussy's nature was stirred to the depths; he has left as fine a memory as young Shaw or young Low-

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ell in the Civil War — a heritage of honour to all who come after him; and to my own children's children it will be a matter of pride that I was his friend.

No man in the country rose to the needs created by the war as he rose; and the last three years of his life left me his debtor as well as his friend.

Ever yours

THEODORE ROOSEVELT

His first assignment, at Governor's Island, was from the end of May till the middle of August, 1917. He was then ordered to Camp Wheeler, Macon, Georgia, to the Thirty-first Division, commanded first by General Kernan, and later by General Hayden. This was one of the new "tent" camps, and Gardner found plenty of work waiting for him, as the place was by no means ready for troops.

On August 28 he wrote:

As you will see from the heading, I am still at a hotel, but I move into camp to-morrow.

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There are no troops here as yet except a few camp guards, etc. We are supposed to have a division of 24,000 men or thereabouts; but as a matter of fact there are (confidentially) only 14,000 National Guardsmen left available in the three States of Georgia, Alabama, and Florida. Unless we fill up with drafted men I don't know what we can do.

I have six civilian clerks, all inexperienced. It has been pretty hard work, but the office is now running pretty well.

November 1, 1917

... About my movements I am entirely in the dark. I shall try to stop in Washington on my way to New York if we go via New York. ... Very likely we shall be in camp near New York for quite a while.

And on November 5:

... Your letter of November 2d here just now. I do not know whether I am glad to go. I try not to reckon in the old terms of thought

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until the war is over. I hope I am ready for anything.

For some months he had been trying for a change from the Staff to the Line so that he could serve with troops. He wrote, "If I go abroad as a Staff Colonel I shall probably pass my time sitting at a desk in an office in Châlons, and see nothing."

On December 7 he came to Washington and was then, at his own request, "demoted" from Colonel to Major. He was sworn in as a Major on December 8 and assigned to the command of a battalion in the One Hundred and Twenty-first (Georgia) Infantry. He was delighted at the change and returned to Macon in the best of health and spirits. From this time for a month he worked early and late with his command, thinking from day to day that the overseas orders would come. His great desire was to serve in France with troops; but this was not to be.

On Wednesday, the 9th of January, he had

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a chill and was persuaded to lie down in his tent during the afternoon and night. On Thursday morning he was able to get up and dress; but his temperature was so high that he was put into an automobile and taken to the Base Hospital, and there laid upon the bed from which he was never to rise. He died on Monday, January 14, at five o'clock in the afternoon. His going was so quiet that the watchers at his bedside could scarcely tell when he passed from life to death. He was fifty-two years old; but in the last twenty years of his life he had done the work of twice twenty years.

It is hard to sum up the character of such a man in a few words, and when we are very near to him it is increasingly difficult. I think he had the finest sense of justice of any one I ever knew, and all his life he played fair. He was gentle in the best meaning of the word, and his loyalty was of the highest kind. He never had a dishonest or dishonourable thought and always, in every step of his career, he placed ideals above expediency.

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He is buried in the National Cemetery at Arlington, and in that vast sepulchre of noble hearts, there sleeps no finer patriot or more gallant gentleman.

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